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SUBJECT: Ambassador Wayne Meets with President of OAS Private Sector of the Americas Group, Discusses 2007 Americas Competitiveness Forum

¶1. Summary: On December 12, Ambassador Anthony Wayne met with the President of the OAS Private Sector of the Americas (PAS) group and a delegation of PAS members from Argentina. They spoke about their desire to reinvigorate a trade dialogue and to foster corporate social responsibility. PAS members also expressed a strong interest in supporting the Americas Competitiveness Forum and Ministerial that Secretary of Commerce Gutierrez will host in June 2007 in Atlanta, as well as helping to strengthen U.S.-Argentina bilateral relations. End Summary.

¶2. On December 12, Ambassador Anthony Wayne, accompanied by SCO Brian Brisson and Senior Commercial Specialist Eugenio Pallares, participated in a luncheon hosted by Ernesto Gutierrez, the first and current President of the OAS Private Sector of the Americas (PAS) Group that was officially sanctioned by OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza in April 2006. Other attendees included Julio Werthein, Treasurer of PAS and President of the Inter-American Trade and Production Council, Juan Bruchou, President of AMCHAM, Hector Mendez, President of the Argentine Industrial Union, Carlos de la Vega, President of

the Argentine Chamber of Commerce, Enrique Mantilla, President of the Exporters Chamber, and Jorge Brito, President of the Bankers Association.

13. The PAS is made up of business leaders in all of the countries of the Western Hemisphere. It grew out of the OASGA hosted by the USG in Fort Lauderdale in June 2005. The Argentine private sector participated actively in the business meetings organized by USDOC prior to the OASGA and agreed to organize the Private Sector Forum in Buenos Aires immediately prior to the IV Summit of the Americas. The business forum, in which Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez participated, was very well attended and demonstrated the important role the private sector can and should play as an advisor and ally to WH governments seeking to fortify democracy, alleviate poverty, generate jobs and increase regional competitiveness. The PSA President and Treasurer are both Argentine, and the Argentine chapter has played a pivotal role in the organization of PSA activities, including the Private Sector Forum held during the OASGA in the Dominican Republic earlier this year.

14. Trade and Soft Diplomacy: The Argentine PSA members that participated in the December 12 luncheon expressed a strong commitment to doing what they can to promote better relations with the United States. Both the Presidents of the Argentine Chamber of Commerce and Argentine Industrial Union (Chamber of Industry) said they wanted to help re-establish the free trade dialogue between the United States and Argentina. The President of the Chamber of Exporters

expressed great appreciation to the U.S. Congress for having voted to extend GSP benefits for two more years; he noted that GSP has been very important to exporters in certain key sectors of the Argentine economy. Many of the business leaders expressed a feeling that the United States and Argentina have a window of opportunity at this time to strengthen their relationship. As has been the case in meetings with other business, civic and political leaders, one of the participants said that the U.S. should resume coldwar era ?soft-diplomacy? initiatives like promotion of cultural events, educational exchanges and a more balanced public image of the United States.

15. Corporate Social Responsibility: One of the key themes of the luncheon was corporate social responsibility and the continued need for the private sector in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America to improve its image through CSR initiatives and an unquestionable commitment to their home countries. They coincided in their assessment that the severe economic crisis that Argentina experienced in 2001/2002 had greatly enhanced the private sector?s recognition of the importance of CSR activities and their commitment to continue them even after the crisis had abated.

16. Competitiveness: Another key theme of the luncheon was the need for increased regional competitiveness. Without exception the lunch participants all expressed great enthusiasm for the Americas Competitiveness Forum and Ministerial that Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez will host in Atlanta in June 2007. The business leaders all agreed that WH governments and private sector organizations must partner with each other to ensure that their countries? comparative advantages are efficiently translated into competitive advantages through the reduction of bureaucracy and the implementation of a longer term approach to economic policy. PSA President Ernesto Gutierrez said that the PSA and the Argentine chapter would play a leading role in coordinating strong private sector participation from throughout the Western Hemisphere in the competitiveness forum

17. Comment: The spirit and message conveyed by the Argentine private sector was one of engagement and a recognition of the important role they have to play in the social and economic advancement of their country. Their strong participation in the OAS PSA process demonstrates clearly that they are players who recognize the importance of achieving greater regional competitiveness to ensure Argentine success in the increasingly global economy.

Wayne